

PROPOSED USE OF THE PLENARY POWERS TO SECURE THAT
THE SPECIFIC NAMES "BENGALENSIS (TUPINAMBIS)",
DAUDIN, [1802], AND "SALVATOR (STELLIO)" LAURENTI,
1768, SHALL BE THE OLDEST AVAILABLE NAMES FOR THE
VARANID LIZARDS CONCERNED

By ROBERT MERTENS

(Senckenbergische Naturforschende Gesellschaft, Forschungs-Institut
u. Natur-Museum Senckenberg, Frankfurt a.M., Germany)

(Commission Reference : Z.N.(S.) 761)

The object of the present application is to ask the International Commission to use its Plenary Powers in such a way as to put an end to the existing state of confusion and uncertainty regarding the names properly applicable to two species of Varanid Lizards. The specific names which it is desired that the Commission should stabilise in this way are : (a) the name *bengalensis* Daudin, [1802],* as published in the combination *Tupinambis bengalensis*, and (b) the name *salvator* Laurenti, 1768, as published in the combination *Stellio salvator*. The relevant facts of this case are set in the following paragraphs. Since one of the names involved has been used for both the species in question it has been considered convenient during the earlier discussion to refer to these species as Species "A" and Species "B" respectively.

Names given or applied to Species "A"

2. Up to the year 1929 Species "A" was known in the literature by the specific name *bengalensis* Daudin (*Tupinambis bengalensis* Daudin, [1802], in Sonnini's Buffon, *Hist. nat. Rept.* 3 : 67). In that year, however, Flower, 1929, *List vertebr. Anim.* 3 : 145 identified the nominal species *Lacerta monitor* Linnaeus, 1758 (*Syst. Nat.* (ed. 10) 1 : 201) with Species "A" and accordingly substituted the name *monitor* Linnaeus for the name *bengalensis* Daudin. In this action Flower was followed by a number of authors. In my revision of the Varanids (1942, *Abh. senckenberg. naturf. Ges.* 462 : 13), however, I retained the long-established name *bengalensis* Daudin, although at that time I was under the impression that that name was technically a junior synonym of the name *dracaena* Linnaeus, 1766 (*Lacerta dracaena* Linnaeus, 1766, *Syst. Nat.* (ed. 12) 1(1) : 360). The name *bengalensis* Daudin has continued to be the name

* Harper, 1940 (*Amer. Midland Nat.* 23 : 692) has shown that this volume was published in 1802 between January and August.

generally used for Species "A" and it is very desirable in the interest of stability in nomenclature that the status of this name should now be confirmed by the Commission.

3. The application of the name *monitor* Linnaeus to Species "A" by Flower was particularly unfortunate, for not only did it disturb the position of the name *bengalensis* Daudin but in addition it did so without any justification, for an inspection of the plates in Seba's *Thesaurus* on which this nominal species was based by Linnaeus shows clearly that, although this was a composite species, Species "A" was not included in it. This will at once be seen by the following analysis of the figures in question, against each of which the modern equivalent has been added in a second column:—

Figure in Seba	Modern equivalent
Seba Mus. 2.t.86.f.2	} <i>Varanus s. salvator</i> (Laurenti, 1768)
" 2.t.105.f.1	
" 1.t.94.f.1	} <i>Varanus n. niloticus</i> (Linnaeus, 1766)
" 1.t.94.f.2	

The diagnosis given by Linnaeus for his species *monitor* is of no assistance, since it is such that it would apply to a number of species of *Varanus* in immature form. It reads: "Corpus maculis albis ocellatis verticillatum. Fasciae aodominis albi lineares interruptae". There is a specimen, 430 mm. in length, preserved in the Stockholm Museum which is referable to *bengalensis* Daudin and which has been claimed to be part of the original material of *monitor* Linnaeus (Andersson, 1900, *Bihang svensk Vet.-Akad., Handl.* (4) : 26 (No. 1) : 5). In my view, this claim has not been established. The most reasonable course is to regard the name *monitor* Linnaeus as an older name not for Species "A" (*bengalensis*) but for Species "B" (*Salvator*) discussed in paragraph 7 below.

4. For the reasons set out above it is a necessary part of the settlement of the present case in such a way as to ensure continuity in nomenclature that the International Commission should use its Plenary Powers to suppress the specific name *monitor* Linnaeus, 1758, discussed above. The same applies to the specific name *dracaena* Linnaeus, 1766, which (as explained in paragraph 2 above) has sometimes in the past been brought forward as the oldest name for Species "A" (*bengalensis*). In actual fact this name should be regarded as a *nomen dubium*. As such, the name *dracaena* Linnaeus serves no useful purpose and, as by reason of its early date, it constitutes a permanent potential threat to currently accepted nomenclature, it should certainly be suppressed under the Plenary Powers.

5. It is necessary now to consider the specific name *salvaquardia* Laurenti, 1768 (*Stellio salvaquardia* Laurenti, 1768, *Specimen med. Syn. Rept.* : 57), which also enters into the present case. The nominal species *Stellio salvaquardia* Laurenti is based upon a figure in Seba's *Thesaurus* (1 : pl. 101, fig. 1) which

had previously been taken by Linnaeus as the basis for his nominal species *Lacerta dracaena*. The specific name *salvaquardia* Laurenti, 1768, is thus a junior objective synonym of *dracaena* Linnaeus, 1766. At present therefore it is an invalid name, but, if (as proposed in paragraph 4 above) the name *dracaena* Linnaeus is now suppressed by the Commission under its Plenary Powers, the name *salvaquardia* Laurenti would become an available name and in its turn a potential threat to the stability of the name *bengalensis* Daudin, unless it too were suppressed under the Plenary Powers. It is accordingly recommended that this course be adopted by the International Commission.

6. There is one other name which requires to be considered in connection with Species "A". This is the name *cepedianus* Daudin (*Tapinambis cepedianus* Daudin, [1802], in Sonnini's Buffon, *Hist. nat. Rept.* 3 : 43). The name *cepedianus* Daudin applies to Species "A", which (as we have seen) Daudin named *bengalensis* later in the same volume (: 67). The names *cepedianus* and *bengalensis* were published in the same book and on the same date and as the name *cepedianus* has page precedence over the name *bengalensis*, it has been suggested that, if the name *monitor* Linnaeus is not used for Species "A", the name to be used for that species ought to be *cepedianus* and not *bengalensis*. This argument is incorrect, because under the *Règles* the relative precedence of two names given to the same taxon in the same book is to be determined not by the principle of page precedence but by that of the First Reviser (see 1953, *Copenhagen Decisions zool. Nomencl.* : 66—67, Decision 123). In the present case the First Revisers were Duméril (A.M.C.) and Bibron (G.), (1836, *Erpétologie gén.* 3 : 480) who placed the name *cepedianus* in the synonymy of *bengalensis*. It is part of the present proposal that the name *bengalensis* Daudin should be placed on the *Official List of Specific Names in Zoology* and in view of the claims which have been (mistakenly) advanced in favour of the name *cepedianus* Daudin, it would be helpful that in the entry to be made in the *Official List* in regard to *bengalensis* Daudin, a reference were to be made to the action taken by Duméril & Bibron as First Revisers.

Names given or applied to Species "B"

7. The name currently used by almost all authors for Species "B" is *salvator* Laurenti, 1768 (*Stellio salvator* Laurenti, 1768, *Specimen med. Syn. Rept.* : 56) and it is very desirable that this name should not be disturbed. However, as explained in paragraph 3 above, there can be little doubt that the much older name *monitor* Linnaeus, 1758, also applies to Species "B" and should therefore replace the name *salvator* Laurenti unless action is taken by the International Commission to prevent this from happening. The name *salvator* has actually been replaced in this way by Deraniyagala in his recent *Coloured Atlas of some Vertebrates of Ceylon* (2 : 86). It has already been recommended (paragraph 4) that the name *monitor* Linnaeus, as a potential

threat to the name currently used for Species "A", should be suppressed by the Commission under its Plenary Powers. The need for such action is greatly reinforced by the much more serious threat to the name (*salvator*) currently used for Species "B" represented by the name *monitor* Linnaeus.

Recommendations

8. For the reasons set out in the preceding paragraphs the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature is asked to stabilise the names to be used for the species of *Varanus* lizards here under discussion by using its Plenary Powers to suppress the older names by which they are threatened, this being the only way by which further argument and confusion can be prevented. The action which the International Commission is now asked to take is that it should :—

- (1) use its Plenary Powers to suppress the under-mentioned specific names for the purposes of the Law of Priority but not for those of the Law of Homonymy :—
 - (a) *monitor* Linnaeus, 1758, as published in the combination *Lacerta monitor* ;
 - (b) *dracaena* Linnaeus, 1766, as published in the combination *Lacerta dracaena* ;
 - (c) *salvaquardia* Laurenti, 1768, as published in the combination *Stellio salvaquardia* ;
- (2) place the under-mentioned specific names on the *Official List of Specific Names in Zoology* :—
 - (a) *bengalensis* Daudin, [1802], as published in the combination *Tupinambis bengalensis*, the entry so made to bear an endorsement that the above name takes precedence over the subjective synonym *cepedianus* Daudin, [1802], as published in the combination *Tupinambis cepedianus* (a name published in the same work and on the same date) by reason of the First Reviser selection made in its favour by Duméril & Bibron, (1836) ;
 - (b) *salvator* Laurenti, 1768, as published in the combination *Stellio salvator* ;
- (3) place on the *Official Index of Rejected and Invalid Specific Names in Zoology* the three specific names specified in (1) above, as there proposed to be suppressed under the Plenary Powers.